



**UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU**

**Teacher Training and Readiness for Inclusive and Special
Education in Finnish Early Childhood Education**

Sanaz Golbazi

Bachelor's Thesis

Early Childhood Teacher Education

Faculty of Teacher Education

University of Turku

November 2025

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

Bachelor Thesis

Author: Sanaz Golbazi

Title: Teacher Training and Readiness for Inclusive and Special Education in Finnish Early Childhood Education

Supervisor: Timo Ruusuvirta

Number of pages: 22 pages

Date: 20.11.2025

Abstract

Inclusive education is a key principle in the Finnish education system. This means that all children, even those with special needs, immigrants, and children from different socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds, can get help in mainstream early childhood education (ECE) settings. Finnish early childhood educators (Varhaiskasvatuksen opettaja) play a crucial role in implementing inclusive practices. However, their training, knowledge, and preparation to work with special children can vary, affecting the quality of inclusive education. Therefore, research on teacher training programs, the level of teachers' readiness for inclusive learning environments and the challenges that exist in achieving this goal seem necessary.

This literature review will explore research studies related to Finnish early childhood educators' readiness for inclusive education, focusing on their training, attitude, Implementation and challenges. In other words, the aim of this literature review is to provide a broad picture of the existing research on the current state of teacher training and the readiness of educators in implementing inclusive practices. This method will help to identify the gaps within literature that can guide future investigations.

Key words: Teacher education, Inclusive education, Finland, Early childhood education (ECEC), Education policy, Special needs, Teacher training, Inclusive pedagogy, Teacher attitude, Inclusion, Teacher readiness, Early childhood teachers, Inclusive practices, Implementation, Challenge, Special needs education.

Table of contents

Abstract

1. Introduction	4
2. Methodology	6
3. Results: Summary of findings from selected studies	8
3.1.The Structure and Content of Inclusive and special Education in Finnish Teacher Training	8
3.1.1. Teacher preparation and training system.....	8
3.1.2. Training Effectiveness from Teacher Perspectives.....	8
3.1.3. Professional Development Approaches.....	9
3.2. Educators' Attitudes and Readiness for Inclusive Learning Environments	11
3.2.1. Attitude Formation and Impact.....	11
3.2.2. Readiness Factors and Competencies.....	12
3.2.3. Support System and Collaboration.....	13
3.3. Challenges and barriers in Teacher Readiness for Inclusion	14
3.3.1. systematic and resource barriers.....	14
3.3.2. Well-being and job impacts.....	15
4. Discussion	17
5. Conclusion and Future Directions	19
6. References	20

1. Introduction

The Finnish national core curriculum guidelines of early childhood education (ECEC) have a strong emphasis on inclusive education which is formed based on the concept of equity, accessibility, and social justice. Inclusive education, viewed as a holistic approach, is a practice in Finnish education policy which makes sure that all children, regardless of ability or differences, have the right to participate in early childhood education and care. In essence, the Finnish national curriculum emphasizes to three main fundamental principles which forms inclusive education. The policy for inclusive education in Finland highlights the importance of belonging and participation. It ensures that every child, regardless of their abilities or background, has equal chances to take part in learning and social activities (Piškur, Takala, Berge, Eek-Karlsson, Ólafsdóttir, & Meuser, 2022).

Furthermore, by recognizing the diverse needs of children, individualized support in three levels is provided for all children to ensure that children receive the level of assistance they need without unnecessary exclusion from their peers (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2022) In connection with three tiers of the support system in ECEC, the core curriculum emphasis the importance of interprofessional collaboration among different experts and administrative systems. According to researchers this collaboration among different experts at ECEC contributes to better implementation of inclusive practices through the praxis of significant support (Äikäs, Pesonen, Heiskanen, Syrjämäki, Aavikko & Viljamaa, 2023; Nislin, Paananen, Repo, Sajaniemi & Sims, 2015).

While Finland promotes inclusive education at the policy level and has strong foundation for equity, participation, and support, its successful implementation largely depends on the competence and preparedness of early childhood educators. Research shows that the success of inclusive education is strongly dependent on the quality of teacher education and their professional development. This connection highlights the importance of addressing teachers' career needs and providing them with appropriate opportunities for ongoing growth and learning. (Äikäs, Pesonen, Heiskanen, Syrjämäki, Aavikko & Viljamaa, 2023). Given this connection, research on teacher training programs and their effectiveness, the level of teachers' readiness for inclusive learning environments, and the challenges that exist in achieving this goal seem necessary. Therefore, the aim of this literature review is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of

teacher preparation for inclusive education in Finland, highlight strengths and gaps in training, and identify areas for improvement that can contribute to more effective inclusive practices in early childhood education.

2. Methodology

2.1. Database

To ensure a comprehensive and high-quality review of relevant studies, the University of Turku's Volter international article search engine has been utilized as the primary database for this literature review. Volter was chosen because it serves as a meta-search engine, providing access to various international academic databases, offering a well-organized filtering system that allows efficient selection of literature based on relevance, publication date, language and access to full texts.

2.2. Selection criteria

The selection of literature for this review was based on the following criteria:

Language: Only studies written in English were included for consistency in analysis.

Publication Date: Articles published within the last ten years (2015-2025) to ensure relevance to contemporary research.

Geographical Focus: Studies focusing on Finland and its early childhood education system.

Full-Text Availability: Only articles with accessible full texts were considered to allow an in-depth review of findings and methodologies.

2.3. Search procedure:

Boolean operators and quotation marks were used to ensure precision and inclusion of specific word combinations. The exact phrases listed below were used in the database searches for each theme to make the process clear and repeatable.

A. The Structure and Content of Inclusive Education in Finnish Teacher Training

1. "Teacher education" AND "inclusive pedagogy" AND "Finland"
2. "Education policy" AND "Inclusive education" AND "Early childhood Finland" AND Finland

3. "Special needs" AND "Early childhood education" AND "teacher training" AND "Finland"
4. "Teacher Professional development" AND "Inclusive education" AND Finland
5. "Inclusive pedagogy" AND "Finnish" AND "preschools"

B. Educators' Attitudes and Readiness for Inclusive Learning Environments

1. "Teacher attitude" AND "inclusion" AND "Finland" AND "early childhood education"
2. "Educators' readiness" AND "inclusive practices" AND "preschool"
3. "Early childhood teachers" AND "Finland" AND "inclusive practices"
4. "Inclusion" AND "Finland" AND "preschool" AND "implementation"

C. Challenges and Barriers in Teacher Readiness for Inclusion

1. "Early childhood education" AND "challenge" AND "inclusion" AND "Finland"
2. "Teacher training" AND "inclusive education" AND "Finland" AND "challenge"
3. challenge AND "teacher training" AND "special needs education" AND "Finland"

2.4. Search results:

After applying relevant keywords and various combinations of search terms, a total of 101 articles were initially identified. Following a filtering process based on selection criteria, including English language, relevance to Finnish early childhood education, publication within the last ten years, and full-text availability, and reviewing the abstract section, a final set of 25 articles was selected for inclusion in this literature review, based on three main themes as:

Theme 1. The Structure and content of inclusive education in Finnish teacher training

Theme 2. Educators' attitudes and readiness for inclusive learning environments

Theme 3. Challenges and Barriers in Teacher Readiness for Inclusion

3. Results: Summary of findings from selected studies.

3.1. The Structure and Content of Inclusive and special Education in Finnish Teacher Training

3.1.1. Teacher preparation and training system

In Finland, according to the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2018), the educational qualifications required for general early childhood teacher is a bachelor's degree in early childhood education (180 ECTS credits) from universities or vocational institutions, which includes theoretical knowledge and pedagogical competencies. Considering the Finnish education approach to inclusion and providing multi-tiered systems of support, as stated previously, general early childhood educators also learn some fundamental and necessary concepts of inclusive pedagogy and creating inclusive environments in various ways (Gagnon, Honkasilta, Jahnukainen, Guilherme & de Oliveira Brito ,2023).

Furthermore, another important element of pre-service teacher training in Finland is the practical supervised teaching experience integrated into the curriculum. These practice periods give the opportunity to pre-service teachers to experience teaching in real-life classroom settings and apply their theoretical knowledge into practice, developing essential skills for working with diverse learners (Pihanperä, Lepistö & Ruokonen, 2022).

3.1.2. Training effectiveness from teachers' perspectives

Teachers' perspectives play a critical role in evaluating the effectiveness of training opportunities, particularly in the context of early childhood education (ECE) in Finland. While Finland is internationally recognized for its high-quality teacher education programs (Säntti, Puustinen & Hansen,2018, 2023), the effectiveness of teacher training opportunities in preparing Finnish educators for inclusive education has been met with mixed perspectives. On the one hand, various studies have shown that the research-based education system at Finnish universities provides teachers with deep theoretical knowledge, pedagogical capabilities, and reflective thinking skills, that form the foundation of a high-standard profession (Säntti, Puustinen & Hansen, 2018, 2023).

According to Niemi (2015), Finnish teacher education has successfully trained reflective practitioners, with research-oriented attitude, highlighting the system's success in fostering professionalism. This research orientation embedded in Finnish teacher education is often credited with enhancing teachers' autonomy and capacity for evidence-informed decision-making.

On the other hand, various studies have emphasized the gap between theory and practice, showing that although teacher education has a strong conceptual foundation, it does not always lead to sufficient confidence or skills to manage inclusive classrooms in the real world. For example, Nislin et al. (2015) found that many early childhood educators felt incompetent to work with children with disabilities or behavioral challenges, indicating the lack of external benchmarking or practical exposure to inclusive settings. Similarly, the research result on Finnish graduating primary teachers revealed the feelings of incompetence and inadequacy in the field of special education due to limited opportunities for practical experience in diverse classrooms (Saloviita & Tolvanen,2017). However, this can be the result of unequal access to professional development across municipalities which creates inconsistencies in readiness (Niemi,2015). In this regard, Äikäs et al. (2023), in their article stated that the quality and availability of ECEC personnel professional development and training might vary depending on local providers or municipalities.

Overall, the findings reveal that Finnish teacher education enjoys an outstanding international reputation for academic professionalism (Säntti, Puustinen & Hansen,2018, 2023); however, its practical effectiveness in preparing educators for inclusive classrooms remains uneven (Nikula, Pihlaja & Tapio, 2024). From one side, teachers appreciate the strong theoretical foundation and research-based approach (Niemi,2015), from other side many express the need for more targeted, experience-based training (Saloviita & Tolvanen,2017) and consistent access to professional development that directly supports inclusive practices (Äikäs et al., 2023).

3.1.3. Professional Development Approaches

Finland's approach to teacher professional development has the same foundation as its entire education system which emphasis on research-based practice, and commitment to

career-long professional development. In the Finnish approach, teachers are viewed not only as classroom practitioners but also as reflective professionals who contribute to educational research and reflecting a culture that values lifelong professional growth (Niemi, 2015). Based on this approach, one of the strengths of professional development in Finland is the emphasis on teamwork, interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaboration. This means that teachers collaborate with specialists in different fields, including administrators, special education teachers, psychologists, and social workers, and by participating in this teamwork, they better promote and implement inclusive practices. This form of collaboration reflects a broader educational approach in Finland that emphasizes the principle that learning is not just a teacher's job, but a collective professional activity (Äikäs et al., 2023). In this regard, Kokko, Takala, and Pihlaja (2021) argue that such collaborations not only strengthen teachers' academic and practical abilities but also foster a sense of professional identity and trust in their shared abilities.

Complementing this collaborative aspect, the research-oriented approach in Finnish teacher education extends into in-service professional development, encouraging teachers to use research methods to evaluate and improve both individual and collective practices (Niemi, 2015). For example, Aspfors and Eklund (2017) found that newly qualified teachers felt these research-based studies had strengthened their ability to think critically and justify their pedagogical decisions.

Nonetheless, despite these advantages, several research findings indicate that certain educators express a necessity for additional targeted and practical training emphasizing inclusive education and interprofessional collaboration strategies. As a result, teachers want professional development that connects theory and practice by combining reflective research with real-world experience in a variety of educational settings. These studies show that Finland's professional development system doesn't always have structured, practice-based courses that deal directly with the problems teachers confront in real life (Niemi, 2015; Nislin et al., 2015). However, addressing these needs is not solely a matter of pedagogical design but also of systemic implementation. For example, research shows that there are differences in access to professional learning opportunities in different parts of the country. They point out that even if national rules encourage fairness, the fact that

municipalities have their own budgets typically leads to uneven training programs. Niemi (2015) also says that the way that Finland organizes ongoing professional development is mostly dependent to each municipality or school administrator. Because of this, the availability of high-quality practical training differs by region. This can make it harder for teachers who want to improve inclusive education to get professional development.

3.2. Educators' Attitudes and Readiness for Inclusive Learning Environments

3.2.1. Attitude Formation and Impact

The Finnish education system and teacher education programs place great importance on inclusive values and social justice in education, emphasizing the principle that all children should be supported in inclusive learning environments (Nislin et al., 2015). However, the extent to which these ideals are realized in practice depends largely on teachers' attitude toward inclusion, their competencies and collaborative support systems (Saloviita, 2020). According to different research results (Dignath, Rimm-Kaufman, van Ewijk & Kunter, 2022; Saloviita, 2020), teachers' perceptions of inclusion is a key explanatory factor which enhances educational policies into daily practice, influencing children's participation, belonging, and learning outcomes. In this regard, the results of a survey conducted by Saloviita (2020) on 1746 teachers in Finland shed new light on issues regarding teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. The findings revealed variations in attitudes and self-assurance among different teaching professional categories, suggesting that inclusion is experienced differently across groups.

This issue should be examined from two interrelated perspectives. On one hand, the formation of educators' attitudes is shaped by several factors such as their perceived competence, previous teaching experiences, and the availability of professional support (Saloviita, 2020; Dignath et al., 2022). On the other hand, simply having a positive attitude alone cannot guarantee the confidence or practical ability needed to effectively manage diverse classrooms. Research indicates that even teachers who express supportive views toward inclusion often report significant challenges, such as increased workload and insufficient educational resources, that hinder the effective implementation of inclusive practices (Saloviita, 2020). This suggests that, although fostering inclusive attitudes is

essential, it is unattainable without systematic and institutional support in the everyday realities of the classroom.

Overall, the perspectives held by educators can function either as facilitator or an impediment to inclusive education. Even though teachers' positive attitude plays a vital role in the implementation of inclusive education, the absence of assistance, and insufficient educational resources may not lead to fully inclusive practices.

3.2.2. Readiness and Competencies

Educators' readiness and competencies for inclusion is an interplay between knowledge, skills, and confidence, ensuring that inclusive practices is both theoretically and practically implemented. In other words, teachers need to be ready and competent so that they can go beyond just having knowledge about inclusion and really use techniques that help every child learn, participate, and be treated fairly.

Readiness reflects how well, educators perceive themselves prepared to implement inclusive principles in everyday practice, shaped by their self-efficacy, prior experiences, and access to professional support (Yada et al., 2021). In this regard, the research result conducted by Yada et al. (2021) shows building higher self-efficacy among educators contributes to their readiness to implement inclusive practices more effectively.

Competence, in turn, refers to the observable skills that enable teachers to design lessons, differentiate instruction, manage classroom behavior, and work collaboratively with multi-professional teams (Ranta et al., 2023).

However, accompanying readiness and competence alone is not enough. Teachers' ability to support and implement inclusive practices also depends to a great extent on the support systems provided and professional collaborations they engage in. In this regard research results indicated that some other factors such as working conditions and educator's well-being, the accessibility of resources, and the efficacy of classroom management may significantly affect teacher's readiness and competence in steering and implementing inclusion practices. (Saloviita ,2020; Nislin et al., 2015).

Building on this, findings from Finnish early childhood settings show that many early childhood educators in Finland felt themselves to be insecure and incompetent working with children with disabilities (Nislin et al., 2015). These insecurities may partly reflect a misinterpretation of the concept of multi-professional teamwork and a resulting inappropriate division of roles and responsibilities in Finnish preschools (Heiskanen, Saha, Pesonen, Viljamaa, Poikola, Nevala & Karna, 2025). In the case of this unclear benchmark or misinterpretation of the policies might cause the delegation of specialist tasks to support staff or general ECEC teachers, leading to feelings of incompetency within educators (Karila & Kupila,2023).

The next section examines how professional collaboration, and institutional support system strengthen educators' capacity to enact inclusion in Finnish ECEC.

3.2.3. Support Systems and Collaboration

In the Finnish education system, the three-tiered support model forms a cornerstone of the national commitment to inclusion (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2022). This structure ensures that all children receive support, but at levels that correspond to their individual needs. Achieving such an ideal and responsive system, requires close collaboration among a range of professionals according to (FNAE, 2022, as cited in Äikäs et al., 2023). Despite this ideal, research results highlight conflicts and challenges in the implementation of interprofessional collaboration (Karila & Kupila,2023). This shortcoming can be due to different reasons. For instance, the research results showed that the shortage of qualified personnel, high workload, and exhaustion, undermines the potential of multi-professional teams to collaborate meaningfully (Kumpulainen, Sajaniemi, Suhonen & Pitkäniemi,2023).

From another side, according to the findings of Äikäs et al. (2023), current legislation and the ECEC curriculum do not specify clear structures or requirements for how professionals should collaborate, resulting in considerable variation and even polarization in collaborative practices. In response to these inconsistencies, the researchers argue that establishing a more document-driven conceptual framework for interprofessional collaboration would help guide local support structures more effectively. Such a

framework, they suggest, would strengthen the implementation of inclusive and equitable ECEC by ensuring that significant support practices are carried out consistently across settings.

Another significant factor affecting the effectiveness of interprofessional collaboration is the limited time allocated for joint planning and reflection. Studies conducted in the Finnish context indicate that professionals frequently lack adequate, protected time to meet, exchange information, and coordinate support strategies, which undermines the continuity and quality of support provided to children (Onnismaa et al., 2017; As cited in Karila & Kupila,2023). In the absence of structured opportunities for shared decision-making, collaboration often remains superficial and reactive instead of systematic.

3.3. Challenges and Barriers in Teacher Readiness for Inclusion

Research shows that although Finnish educators are ideologically committed to inclusion, their willingness to implement inclusive practices is often constrained by systemic, and emotional factors (Heiskanen et al., 2025; Nislin et al., 2015). So, the following sub-sections discuss two interconnected domains: systematic and resource barriers, well-being and job satisfaction impacts.

3.3.1. Systematic and Resource Barriers

The framework of inclusive education in Finland is based on a three-tier support system, designed to ensure the provision of general, intensified, or special support to children according to their individual needs (Heiskanen et al., 2023; Nislin et al., 2015). Despite the progressive nature of this structure, evidence indicates that its implementation across municipalities and early childhood education units is not uniform, and significant variations can be observed in the quality and extent of its practical realization. Disparities in the allocation of resources, availability of personnel, and opportunities for professional development among municipalities are among the key factors contributing to these differences in the implementation of inclusion (Äikäs et al., 2023; Nislin et al., 2015; Karila & Kupila,2023).

From an operational perspective, research indicates that large group sizes, limited support staff, and insufficient time for professional planning constitute major structural barriers to

the effective implementation of inclusion (Nislin et al., 2015; Karila & Kupila ,2023). Additionally, research by Äikäs et al. (2023) reveals disparities between urban and rural contexts, with many smaller municipalities unable to afford specialized professionals including special education teachers, psychologists, and therapists.

Furthermore, the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in educational settings has introduced new challenges to the implementation of inclusion resulting in a considerable higher risk of social exclusion for multilingual children. According to the findings of Arvola, Lastikka and Reunamo (2017) and Mansikka, Londen, Holm, Saloranta & Nordström (2024), teachers face difficulties in balancing the requirements of linguistic inclusion with the demands of the national curriculum, particularly in multilingual groups. These challenges increase the workload of educators and limit their capacity to provide individualized instructional support.

3.3.2. Well-being and Job Satisfaction Impacts

According to Kumpulainen, Sajaniemi, Suhonen & Pitkäniemi (2023), there is negative correlation between the cumulative effects of systemic and professional challenges and teachers' well-being and job satisfaction. The research results showed that, given the increasing demand for inclusive practices in Finnish education sectors, if not supported by adequate structural resources, teachers' mental and emotional health will increasingly be under strain and professionals commonly report exhaustion and reduced autonomy even as they remain highly engaged in their work. Similarly, Heiskanen et al. (2025) have pointed out in their article that the lack of support resources causes emotional exhaustion and moral distress in teachers, but they still take responsibility for doing everything they think is possible and maintain their participation even in challenging situations.

However, unless effective measures are taken to systematically manage teachers' workload, their health status will continue to deteriorate and may have a negative impact on inclusion outcomes as well as retention of the teaching force (Kumpulainen, et al. ,2023; Nislin et al., 2015).

Furthermore, job satisfaction among teachers is closely linked to their perceived autonomy and the level of collaborative support they experience. For example, Kokko, Takala, and

Pihlaja (2021) found that teachers who teach collaboratively or are involved in professional collaboration tend to have higher job satisfaction. In contrast, those who feel isolated or unsupported tend to experience higher levels of stress and reduced motivation. The findings of Äikäs et al., (2023), further highlight that strong professional networks can help reduce burnout by strengthening collective problem-solving and shared responsibility.

4. Discussion

This study set out to provide a broad picture of the existing research on the state of teacher training and the readiness of educators in implementing inclusive practices in Finnish early childhood education and care (ECEC), drawing on recent research from 2015–2025.

The review aimed to explore how Finnish teacher education equips educators for inclusive pedagogy, how teachers view their own skills and attitudes related to inclusion, and which persistent challenges hinder their preparedness and overall well-being. The results present a multifaceted reality highlighting both strengths and gaps.

Based on the results of this research, it seems that on the one hand, the Finnish teacher education system, which has been praised internationally, offers strong theoretical foundations and inclusive values. However, the existence of practical challenges, resource inequalities, workload and emotional pressures on teachers still limit the full realization of inclusive education.

The findings from one side highlight teacher training program is mainly researched based and educators are trained to be critical thinkers. Teachers are educated to see teaching as more than just technical labor, but as an ethical and intellectual profession. Furthermore, aligning with Finland's national curriculum, highlighting belonging and participation of all children regardless of ability, language, or background, the results of the current study showed that many teachers have positive attitudes toward inclusion. However, the findings revealed some limitations in translating theory into effective inclusive practice. In other words, the realization of such an ideal and responsive system or the extent to which this ideal is realized depends largely on different factors.

For instance, the findings showed dissatisfaction among some educators complaining about the existing gap between theory and practice especially when working with special needs (Nislin et al., 2015) or multilingual and immigrant children (Mansikka, Londen, Holm, Saloranta & Nordström ,2024) and requested for more specific and practice-oriented training focusing on inclusive education (Saloviita & Tolvanen,2017).

The study also showed that although Finnish teachers possess strong general teaching skills and a solid understanding of inclusive values, many early childhood educators still feel insecure when

working with children with disabilities. Regional disparities and limited funding for multi-professional support, such as special education teachers, therapists, and psychologists (Äikäs et al., 2023), contribute to reduced confidence and competence among educators (Nislin et al., 2015). This variation between municipalities and resource allocation also has affected access to professional learning opportunities which often results in uneven provision of training programs (Niemi ,2015). These results raise questions regarding equity and consistency since they imply that although Finland's inclusion plans are innovative, their execution mostly relies on local facilities and capabilities.

The findings indicate that these systemic barriers and interpersonal challenges significantly impact on teachers' emotional well-being and job satisfaction (Valkonen, & Furu, 2023). It also highlighted that without stable structural support and a fair distribution of workload, the risk of teacher burnout may undermine the long-term sustainability of inclusive education (Kokko, Takala & Pihlaja ,2021).

5. Conclusion and Future Directions

The results of this study show that inclusion in the Finnish education system, specially at ECEC sector which has been the scope of this research, is not simply considered as an educational goal, but rather a dynamic process of monitoring, evaluating and developing according to the articles of Ministry of Education and Culture (2022). The foundations of this dynamic process in inclusion in Finnish education system are connected to the moral commitment to equality, participation and support at the policy level, and a research-based approach to teacher education.

However, to maintain this dynamic , building on these findings, future work should focus on strengthening the structures and practices that support inclusion, thereby ensuring that Finland's ECEC system continues to uphold its commitment to equity. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary that future policy reforms prioritize the promotion of resource distribution and funding at the municipality level in a way that all children and teachers, regardless of geographic location, have access to adequate and equitable support. Furthermore, in light of this thesis' findings, enhancing inclusion-focused training in teacher education programs is crucial to strengthening teachers' pedagogical readiness, fostering positive attitudes, and ensuring consistent implementation of inclusive approaches across ECEC settings. Policymakers should also think about adding measures of well-being to evaluations of teacher education and assessments of institutional quality since teacher well-being and emotional resilience has positive correlation with their perceived autonomy and self-efficacy, consequently affecting the practices of inclusion in classroom. Finally, given the increasing population of immigrants and multinational or multilingual children in the Finnish education system, it seems necessary to increase intercultural and multilingual educational approaches for teachers in the teacher education curriculum. Future studies should also study how teacher beliefs, linguistic attitudes, and institutional policies impact the engagement of immigrant and multilingual children.

References

- Äikäs, A., Pesonen, H., Heiskanen, N., Syrjämäki, M., Aavikko, L., & Viljamaa, E. (2023). *Approaches to collaboration and support in early childhood education and care in Finland: Professionals' narratives. European Journal of Special Needs Education, 38*(4), 528–542. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2022.2127081>
- Arvola, O., Lastikka, A. L., & Reunamo, J. (2017). Increasing immigrant children's participation in the Finnish early childhood education context. *The European Journal of Social & Behavioural Sciences, 20*(3), 2538-2548.
- Aspfors, J., & Eklund, G. (2017). Explicit and implicit perspectives on research-based teacher education: Newly qualified teachers' experiences in Finland. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 43*(4), 400-413.
- Dignath, C., Rimm-Kaufman, S., van Ewijk, R., & Kunter, M. (2022). Teachers' beliefs about inclusive education and insights on what contributes to those beliefs: a meta-analytical study. *Educational Psychology Review, 34*(4), 2609-2660.
- Finnish National Agency for Education. (2022). *National core curriculum for early childhood education and care 2022*. Finnish National Agency for Education. <https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/national-core-curriculum-for-ecec-2022.pdf>
- Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. (2018). *Teacher education in Finland*. Ministry of Education and Culture. <https://okm.fi/en/teacher-education>
- Gagnon, J. C., Honkasilta, J., & Jahnuainen, M. (2023). Teacher education in Finland: Progress on preparing teachers for the inclusion of students with learning and behavior difficulties. *Teacher Education Around the World: Challenges and Opportunities*. de Oliveira Brito, R. & Anselmo Guilherme, A.(eds.). Brasilia, Portugal: Unesco, 197-221.
- Heiskanen, N., Saha, M., Pesonen, H., Viljamaa, E., Poikola, M., Nevala, P., & Karna, E. (2025). The ultimate responsibility? The analysis of the position of special education teachers when the child is left without support in early childhood education. *Journal of research in special educational needs, 25*(3), 460-472.

- Karila, K., & Kupila, P. (2023). Multi-professional teamwork in Finnish early childhood education and care. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 17(1), 21.
- Kokko, M., Takala, M., & Pihlaja, P. (2021). *Finnish teachers' views on co-teaching*. *British Journal of Special Education*, 48(1), 112–132. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8578.12348>
- Kumpulainen, K. R., Sajaniemi, N., Suhonen, E., & Pitkäniemi, H. (2023). Occupational well-being and teamwork in Finnish early childhood education. *Journal of early childhood education research*, 12(2), 71-97.
- Li, Y., & Dervin, F. (2018). *Continuing professional development of teachers in Finland*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mansikka, J. E., Londen, M., Holm, G., Saloranta, M., & Nordström, A. (2024). Language as a medium for inclusion and exclusion: Supporting multilingualism in a Swedish minority language ECEC setting in Finland. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research*, 13(1), 319-342.
- Ministry of Education and Culture. (2022). *Quality in early childhood education and care: Continuous improvement framework*. Government of Finland.
- Niemi, H. (2015). *Teacher professional development in Finland: Towards a more holistic approach*. *Psychology, Society, & Education*, 7(3), 279–294. <https://doi.org/10.25115/psy.e.v7i3.519>
- Nikula, E., Pihlaja, P., & Tapio, P. (2024). Visions of an inclusive school—Preferred futures by special education teacher students. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28(5), 673-687.
- Nislin, M. A., Paananen, M., Repo, L., Sajaniemi, N., & Sims, M. (2015). Working with children with special needs in Finnish kindergartens: Professionals and/or specialists?. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 5(3), 1-10.
- Pihanperä, M., Lepistö, J., & Ruokonen, I. (2022). An integrative literature review of university-based early childhood education and care centres within early childhood teacher education settings. *Education Sciences*, 12(2), 141.

Piškur, B., Takala, M., Berge, A., Eek-Karlsson, L., Ólafsdóttir, S. M., & Meuser, S. (2022). Belonging and participation as portrayed in the curriculum guidelines of five European countries. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 54(3), 351-366.

Ranta, S., Kangas, J., Harju-Luukkainen, H., Ukkonen-Mikkola, T., Neitola, M., Kinos, J., ... & Kuusisto, A. (2023). Teachers' pedagogical competence in Finnish early childhood education—A narrative literature review. *Education Sciences*, 13(8), 791.

Säntti, J., Puustinen, M., & Salminen, J. (2018). Theory and practice in Finnish teacher education: a rhetorical analysis of changing values from the 1960s to the present day. *Teachers and Teaching*, 24(1), 5-21.

Säntti, J., Puustinen, M., & Hansen, P. (2023). Unmentioned challenges of Finnish teacher education: Decontextualisation, scientification and the rhetoric of the research-based agenda. In *Finland's famous education system: Unvarnished insights into Finnish schooling* (pp. 105-119). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

Saloviita, T., & Tolvanen, A. (2017). Outcomes of primary teacher education in Finland: An exit survey. *Teaching education*, 28(2), 211-225.

Saloviita, T. (2020). Attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education in Finland. *Scandinavian journal of educational research*, 64(2), 270-282.

Valkonen, S., & Furu, A. C. (2023). Finnish ECEC personnel's views on the challenging nature of promoting social justice: a sustainability research perspective. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 31(4), 529-543.

Yada, A., Björn, P. M., Savolainen, P., Kyttälä, M., Aro, M., & Savolainen, H. (2021). Pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in implementing inclusive practices and resilience in Finland. *Teaching and teacher education*, 105, 103398.